

# Every Child Learning Every Day



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An early childhood newsletter from the State Department of Education

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## READY TO LEARN

### Is there a rock for everybody?

Idaho teachers have shared some of their favorite books and activities for children as part of Superintendent of Public Instruction Marilyn Howard's "Dinner and a Book" initiative.

This month's submission is from Cindy Cirard, a third grade teacher from Trail Wind Elementary School, Boise.



**Book:** "Everybody Needs a Rock," by Byrd Baylor, published in 1974 and illustrated by Peter Parnall.

**Synopsis of story:** The author talks about the steps to finding the "perfect" rock.

**Activity:** After reading the book, take a nature walk and use the guidelines set forth by the author for finding a perfect rock.

Another book by the author/illustrator duo: "Another Way to Listen."

To learn more about Superintendent of Public Instruction Marilyn Howard's Dinner and a Book or to submit your favorite Dinner and a Book recipe visit: [www.sde.state.id.us/DinnerandaBook/DinnerDinnerandaBook](http://www.sde.state.id.us/DinnerandaBook/DinnerDinnerandaBook).

## Kids learn lessons from play, too

### Dear Reader:

Are we putting too much pressure on our youngest children to learn the ABCs and 123s?

That was a question raised in a newspaper article earlier this month. The article detailed a parent's concerns that her child in kindergarten wasn't give a break for recess.

The story highlights a growing concern I am hearing from parents and preschool education providers.

The concern is that with an increasingly intense focus on ensuring children are "ready to learn," we may be losing sight of the important lessons children learn through play.

I have been and continue to be an advocate for efforts to ensure that preschool age children are exposed to a rich learning environment.

Children should be read to, have access to books and writing materials, and learn about letters and numbers. Research shows that children



**Dr. Marilyn Howard**  
Superintendent of Public Instruction

who miss these experiences often start school behind other students.

A focus on the preliteracy skills is important, but so

are the lessons learned by interaction in their environment and with other children.

Researchers refer to preschool children as "little scientists." And they are.

One of my staff members jokes that her 2-year-old's habit of dumping her milk into toy stacking cups is really an ongoing experiment in volume.

And I've watched my own grandchildren test the law of gravity by rolling trucks down the neighborhood slide.

Children need rich learning experiences and that includes the opportunity to "experiment" with the world around them and the time to learn how to get along with others on the playground.

*Marilyn Howard*

## READY TO LEARN

## Chick activities chirp up spring lessons

Springtime is the perfect time to introduce stories and activities about chicks.

Below are some activities and books to try:

### Here, Chicky, Chicky

Put a stuffed toy chick in a paper bag; then read aloud "An Extraordinary Egg" by Leo Leoni (Scholastic, Inc.) You probably won't be able to finish the story without hearing cries of, "That's not a chicken!"

After reading the story, put on your acting face and, with a puzzled look, ask the children why they didn't think the baby alligator was a chick. Ask them to describe a chick for you.

Then pull the toy chick out of the bag and tell the children that they will be learning all about chicks.



### The Reading Nest

To create a nest, fill a baby pool with raffia and a few white pillow "eggs."

Complete the nest with a few colored craft feathers. Put some great books in a basket beside the reading nest.

"Birthday Chickens," by Shirley Kurtz, published by Good Books; "Minerva Louise At School," by Janet Morgan Stoeke, published by Dutton Children's Books, "Here Comes Henny," by Charlotte Pomerantz, published by Greenwillow Books.

### Chicky's Walk

This homemade big book will be a favorite! Read aloud the story

"Rosie's Walk" by Pat Hutchins (Alladin Books).

Ask the children to remember some of the places Rosie visited. Emphasize words that describe where Rosie walked (under, over, around, and other positional words). Tell the children that each of them will be illustrating a different place for Rosie's baby, Chickie, to visit.

Give each child a piece of paper; then write her story as she tells you where the chick is walking. Remind her to use a position word in her story. Staple the pages inside a barn-shaped cover made out of construction paper. Read the complete story of "Chickie's Walk" with all the children.



## RESOURCES

### Information available on autism

#### From the Idaho's Early Childhood Clearing House:

**What is autism?** Autism is a biologically based developmental disability. This complex disorder affects a child's communication skills, social relationships, and behavior.

The symptoms of autism appear during the first three years of a child's life.

Autism appears across all populations without regard for race, education, sex, or ethnic background. For every girl diagnosed with autism, there are three to four boys diagnosed.

Three general areas of impairment are common to all children diagnosed with autism, but rarely will one child exhibit all the related symptoms.

#### What are the symptoms of autism?

A diagnosis of autism is made when an individual displays six or more of 12 symptoms listed across three major areas: social interaction, communication, and behavior. A detail listing of symptoms is available at <http://www2.state.id.us/dhw/ecic/home.htm>.

#### What should concerned parents do?

If parents have concerns about their child's development, it is wise to seek help early. Early identification and intervention can make a big difference for your child and your family. Autism is a life-long condition; it will not go away.

Intervention that occurs early in a child's life may be particularly effective due to the plasticity of the brain. Early diagnosis and treatment may reduce the frequency and/or intensity of symptoms and positively affect long-term outcomes.

#### What are some resources for families in Idaho?

Talk to the child's physician about concerns. Prior to the discussion write down questions and concerns. Specific examples describing the child's behavior are very helpful.

Staff at the Idaho CareLine can direct callers to a wide range of resources in their community. Idaho CareLine dial 2-1-1 or 1-800-926-2588.

## NUTRITION

### Strawberries make nutritious snacks

Children and adults alike enjoy strawberries because they are beautiful, nutritious, and delicious. One cup of strawberries provides well over 100 % of the vitamin C bodies need every day.



Strawberries, fresh or frozen, also are a wonderful addition to any meal. They may be added to cereal, salads, or used to make a berry smoothie. Strawberry "ice cream" sandwiches are a child's favorite just mix sliced strawberries

with plain or vanilla yogurt, spread the mix between graham crackers, then place in the freezer until firm.

#### Strawberry fruit pops

2 cups hulled (stems removed) and halved strawberries  
1 cup orange juice  
4 7-oz paper cups  
4 pop sticks or plastic spoons  
Place fruit and juice in a blender container or food processor bowl. Whirl until smooth. Pour mixture into four 7 oz. Paper cups; place cups in freezer until partially frozen. Place pop sticks or plastic spoons in center of cups. Freeze until firm.

#### Roly-Poly activity

To do this activity, you will need a tennis or other small ball per child and mark a spot for each child.

Arrange the children in one long line, facing an open area.

Present the following challenges to the children:

\*sit, rolling the ball forward using one or two hands to push the ball

\*while standing, make the ball move on the ground slowly (demonstrate for the children)

\*roll the ball over a spot

\*toss the ball up and let it bounce

\*toss the ball and catch it (start with very small tosses)

\*toss the ball from hand to hand

## READY TO LEARN

### Help child make educated guesses: estimates

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics offers simple tips to help parents help children understand math. **This month's skill** — estimation.



#### What parents can do:

Regularly use words such as "about," "near," "approximately," "in between," "around," "more than," and "fewer than."

To practice estimation, use any daily activity like eating or going to the store. Ask your child to make an estimate of how much, how long, or how many. When you find the actual answer, compare it with the estimate you originally made.

This will help your child learn to make reasonable guesses.

Estimation activities may sound complicated, but they don't have to be. Try something simple, for example, just take a guess as to which one of his or her friends is the tallest and then check it out for accuracy.

To help older children learn estimation, write down the estimate and then the actual count. If you repeat the problem or give a similar problem, children will eventually estimate closer to the real count. It isn't important to get the "right" answer, but to see how close children can come. Help them practice the technique to improve their estimation skills.

## ACTIVITIES

### Teachers play vital role in disability determinations

#### What is the Disability Determinations Service (DSA)?

DSA does medical development for disability claims through a contract with the Social Security Administration (SSA).

#### What is SSA's definition of disability?

A child must have a physical and/or mental condition that has lasted or is expected to last for at least 12 months or be expected to result in death and must also result in marked and severe functional limitations.

#### What information is used to make the determination?

Records from doctors and other health professionals who treat the child are reviewed, in addition to information from teachers, psychologists, counselors, social workers, parents,

etc. Records from a child's teacher (s) and school records are two of the best sources about how a school-aged child functions and can address whether there have been changes in functioning throughout the year.

SSA has developed two new forms; a teacher questionnaire and request for administrative info:

#### "Teacher Questionnaire"

Why the teacher?

— The teacher sees the child every day;

— He/she is objective;

— He/she observes the child in a variety of activities; and

— The teacher offers a balance to the parental perspective.

The questionnaire assesses: acquiring/using information, attending/completing tasks, interacting/relating with others, moving

about/manipulating objects, caring for self, health/physical well-being; What activities is the child able or not able to perform? Which activities are limited in comparison with those of same-age peers? What type and amount of help does the child need to complete age-appropriate activities?

#### "Request for Administrative Information"

The DSA may ask for school records to include copies of psychological evaluations and other types of testing, attendance records, behavior records, therapeutic interventions, use of special services. Individualized Education Plan's and other assessments about the child's ability to perform age-appropriate activities.